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CONTENTS

- | | |
|--|----|
| Inca Weaving and Costume | 5 |
| Ann Pollard Rowe | |
| Matrilineal Descent Groups and Weavings
on the Island of Savu | 55 |
| Geneviève Duggan | |
| Kyrgyz <i>Shyrdak</i> | 75 |
| Stephanie Bunn | |
| Textiles and Textile Customs of the
Tai Dam, Tai Daeng, and
Their Neighbors in Northern Laos | 93 |
| Mattiebelle Gittinger, Karen Anderson Chungyampin,
and Chanporn Saiyalard | |
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Cover : Inca woman's shawl, detail. Weft-faced plain weave and complementary-weft weave stripes. Cotton warp, camelid fiber weft. The Textile Museum 91.366. See Ann Pollard Rowe, *Inca Weaving and Costume*, pp. 5-53, fig. 27.

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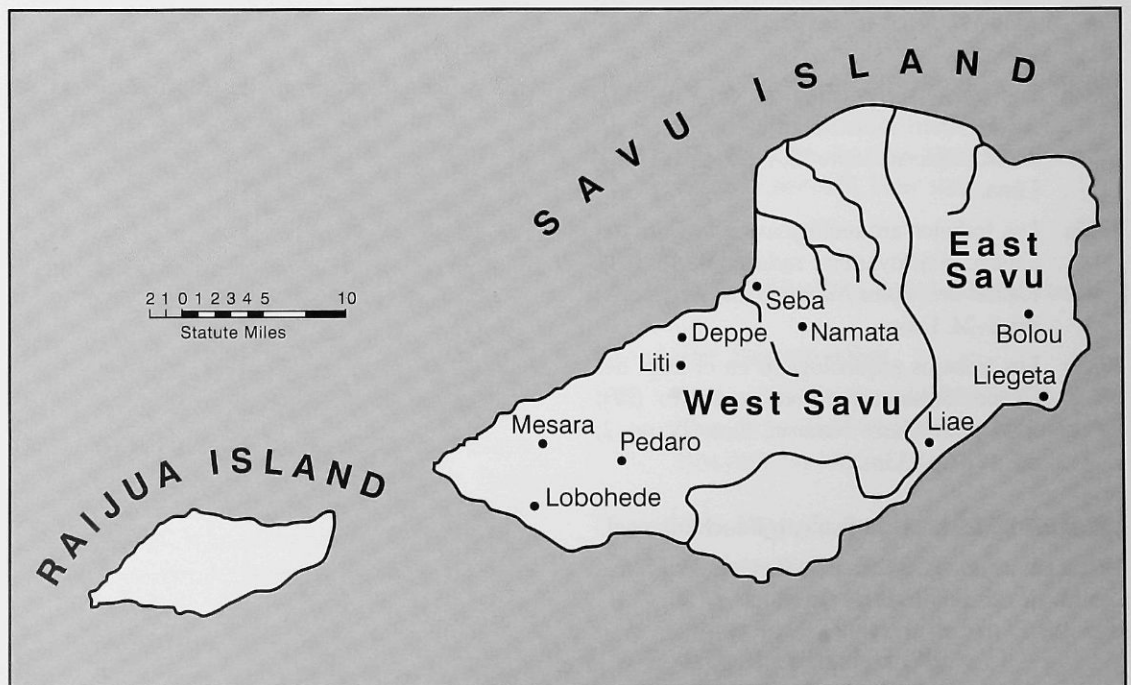
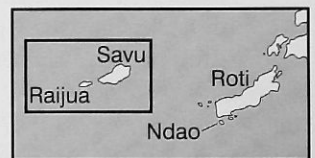
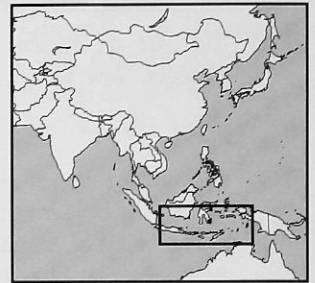
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Matrilineal Descent Groups and Weavings on the Island of Savu

Geneviève Duggan

The island of Savu is located in the Lesser Sunda Islands of eastern Indonesia, halfway between Sumba to the west and Timor to the east. Although it is near the equator, the island is arid because the short rainy season brings inadequate rain. During the nine months of the dry season, from April to December, the Savunese survive mainly from the juice of the lontar palm tree, which they tap twice daily.¹

Traditions are still strong, even among the youth. The island has been spared tourism with the exception of a few cruise boats each year. In accordance with the motto of Indonesia, "Unity in diversity," the teaching of local history and culture is part of the school curriculum. Competitions of traditional dances (*ledo* and

pedoa) are organized for students; these take place at night during independence celebrations and provide occasions to display new Savunese ikat fashion (fig. 1).

Most Savunese are Christian, but they maintain several rituals associated with their indigenous religion. The Savunese have a system of bilineal descent; each person belongs to a patrilineal clan (*udu*) and to a matrilineal moiety (*hubi*).² The male clans are well known, but knowledge about the female moieties is considered secret. This paper explores the relationship between various female descent groups and woven textile motifs that carry heraldic significance.



Fig. 1. Competition of traditional dance performed by Savunese youth. Lontar palm baskets filled with beans are attached to the feet of the dancers to provide rhythm. Festivities for Independence, August 1994.

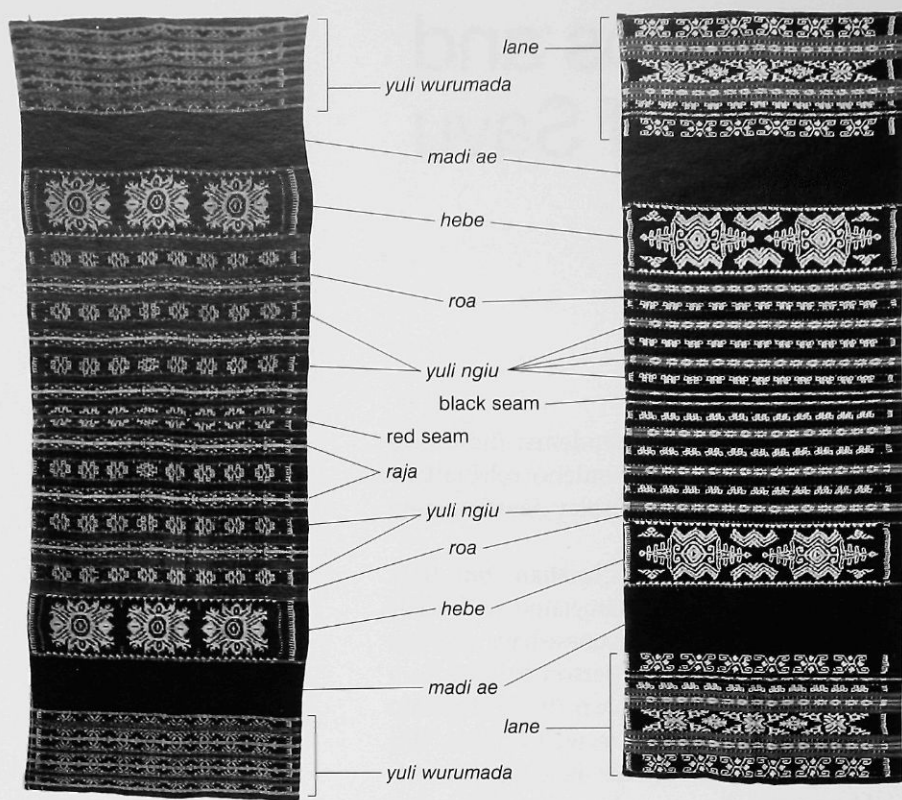


Fig. 2. (left) Traditional sarong *Ei Raja*, *Hubi Ae*. Motif *bunga lehu* for all *wini*. The sarong is made of two identical pieces sewn together; the seam is red for *Hubi Ae*. Per half piece: 7 bands of black stripes (*roa*) for the center part, 3 bands of repetitive geometrical motifs for the end of the piece (*yuli wurumada*) are characteristic for *Hubi Ae*. The band of floating warp (*raja*) gives the name to the sarong and was an earmark for the ruling class (*raja*). Handspun, handwoven cotton, natural dyes: indigo and *mengkudu*. 1.61 x 1.58 m. Author's collection.

Fig. 3. (right) Sarong *Worapi* for all *hubi* with 7 black stripes per half piece as for a sarong of *Hubi Ae*. The main motif is traditional or can show variations, but the end motifs (*lane*) are larger, diversified, and confer neutrality. The seam is black or red, according to the *hubi* affiliation of the weaver. The motif is a variation of the motif *pudila*, which was earlier restricted to the *raja* of Seba. Chemical dyes; cotton. 1.57 x 1.57 m. Author's collection.

The Start of The Two Female Moieties

Everything in Savu starts with a legend. According to Savunese mythology, thirty or more generations ago there were two sisters: Muji Babo and her younger sister, Lou Babo, were daughters of Babo Rede, who was at the origin of a clan, *udu Teriwu*.³ Both girls were weaving at their parents' house. One day Lou Babo suggested that they make an exhibition of their weavings. Since Lou Babo was said to be the more skillful, Muji Babo refused. A fight started between the two sisters which was so violent that their parents had to separate them from one another. In order to choose their weaving tools and divide the dyes, they were presented with two clusters of betel nuts, a large cluster and a small one. As Muji Babo was the elder, she took the larger cluster of nuts, creating the *Hubi Ae* descendant group, or Greater Blossom; Lou Babo started the lineage *Hubi Iki*,⁴ or Lesser Blossom, also known under the less derogatory name *Ei Rede*. The two sisters also had to divide the dye. Muji Babo took her share of the indigo dye first, leaving the bottom part (which had the higher concentration of dye) to her younger sister, allowing Lou Babo to make a richer quality of

indigo that was almost black.⁵ The first group of motifs created was a lozenge-based motif for *Hubi Ae* called *wokelaku* and a serpentine-like motif for *Hubi Iki* called *Ei Ledo* (figs. 4, 5, and 6). Since that legendary time each Savunese woman must wear the original motif of her *hubi* for the two most important life-crisis ceremonies, her wedding and her funeral, in order not to reactivate the fight of her ancestors.

The two *hubi* are recognizable not only in the motifs, but also in the structural composition of the sarong. A Savunese sarong is made of two identical halves sewn together (figs. 2 and 3). The seam is red for *Hubi Ae*, symbolizing the lighter color of Muji Babo's share of dye, and black for *Hubi Iki*, as a reminder of the dark indigo left for Lou Babo. Seven black stripes (*roa*) per half are compulsory for *Hubi Ae*; four larger black stripes per half form the earmark of *Hubi Iki*. Besides the seven black stripes, the *Hubi Ae* sarong often shows three white warp stripes called *raja*, which gives the name *Ei Raja* (*sarong Raja*) to the piece. For a certain time the *raja* stripes were used to distinguish the ruling class from the common people of the island. It happens that all *sarongs Raja* show motifs of *Hubi Ae*. But Savunese insist that the separation into two moieties is not to be interpreted as a distinction between an upper and a lower class.

Although the red or black seam never shows while a woman wears a sarong, the size and the number of stripes help identify from a distance the female moiety to which the wearer belongs. Today, when women can wear all sorts of motifs, the black or red seam continues to indicate the *hubi* connection of the weaver. This rule is strictly observed. A woman would not dare to wear a sarong showing the original motif combined with the required structural composition of the sarong if it were not from her own moiety.

To allow more freedom of choice, a neutral sarong called *Ei Worapi* has been created, and women from either *hubi* may wear it (fig. 3). The *Ei Worapi* has seven black stripes, as does the *Hubi Ae* sarong, but the end motifs (*lane*) are larger, and the stripes are not repeated identically.⁶ This allows for more creativity and requires more skill from the weaver since those sarongs often show three colors produced by the tie-dye process: white, red, and blue-black. But there is only a single ikat process; some of the threads are simply untied before the second dye is applied. As soon as a traditional motif is combined with the stripes of *lane*, the piece loses its traditional character and can be worn for secular and

Christian festivities without fear of transgressing rules. Figure 22 shows a coffin covered by a sarong embroidered with a cross, illustrating the compromise made by the Savunese. The main motif, *patola morena*, identifies the deceased; the end motifs indicate the neutral category of *Ei Worapi*, which is then compatible with the Christian cross.

From the Blossoms (*Hubi*) to the Seeds (*Wini*)

Over the centuries the Greater and the Lesser Blossoms have created subgroups called *wini*, the seeds.⁷ *Hubi Ae* has formed seven *wini*: *Wini Dila Robo*, *Wini Ga*, *Wini Raja*, *Wini Mako*, *Wini Pi'i*, *Wini Migi*, and *Wini Waratada*. *Hubi Iki* has formed four or five *wini*: *Wini Jawu*, and *Jingi Wiki*, which split into two branches called *Wini Putenga* and *Wini Waratada*.⁸ Some extraordinary historical or tragic event, a second marriage or a legend, is always at the origin of a new *wini*. Some *wini* terminated the counting of their genealogies after a daughter received a Christian name; others terminated after independence since Savunese stopped counting the raja genealogies when there were no longer any rajas.

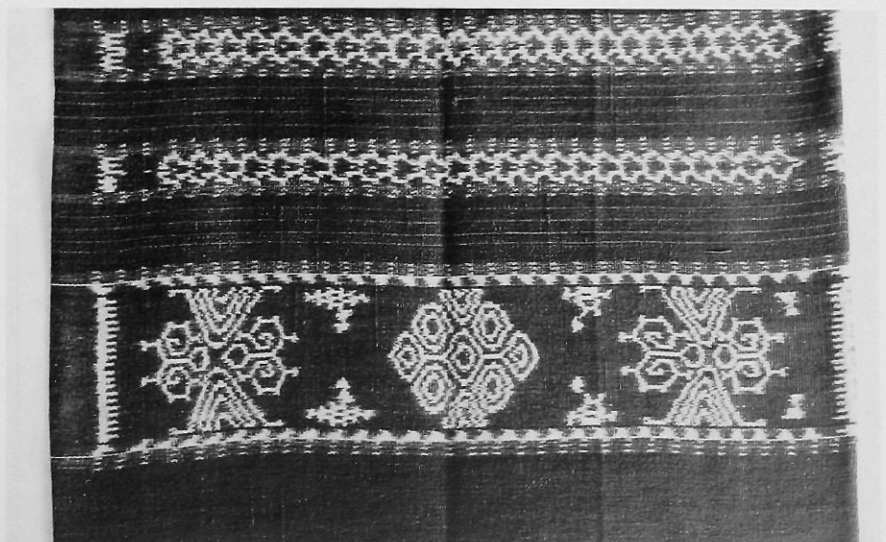
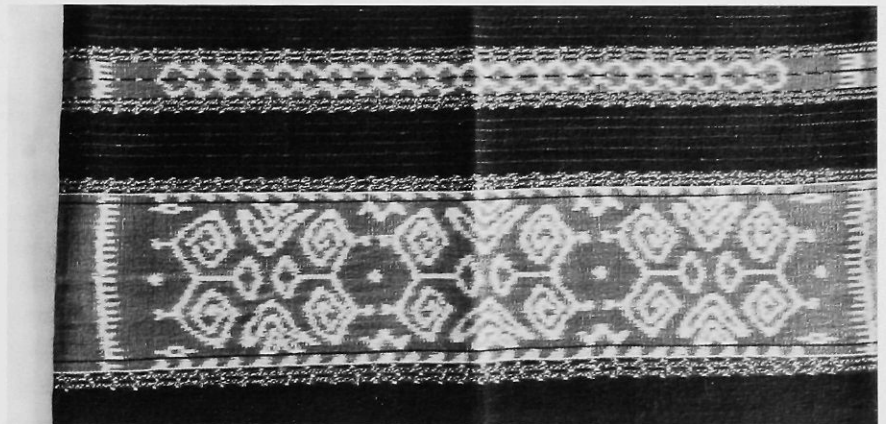
The Female Descent Groups

All Savunese belong to a localized male descent group (*udu*) and to a non-localized female descent group (*hubi*). The *udu* plays an important role in economic bonds, land management, and ceremonies presiding over the agricultural cycle.⁹ The *hubi* is an essential element in the emotional life of the individual, especially in life-crisis ceremonies and as keeper of stability of links in the family at large. Members of a *wini*, who may be scattered on the island, reunite at life-crisis ceremonies. The female lineages build an invisible horizontal web of relationships across the island. Although the term "clan" might not be appropriate for *hubi* and *wini*, the term moiety does not reflect the importance of their roles in social organization.

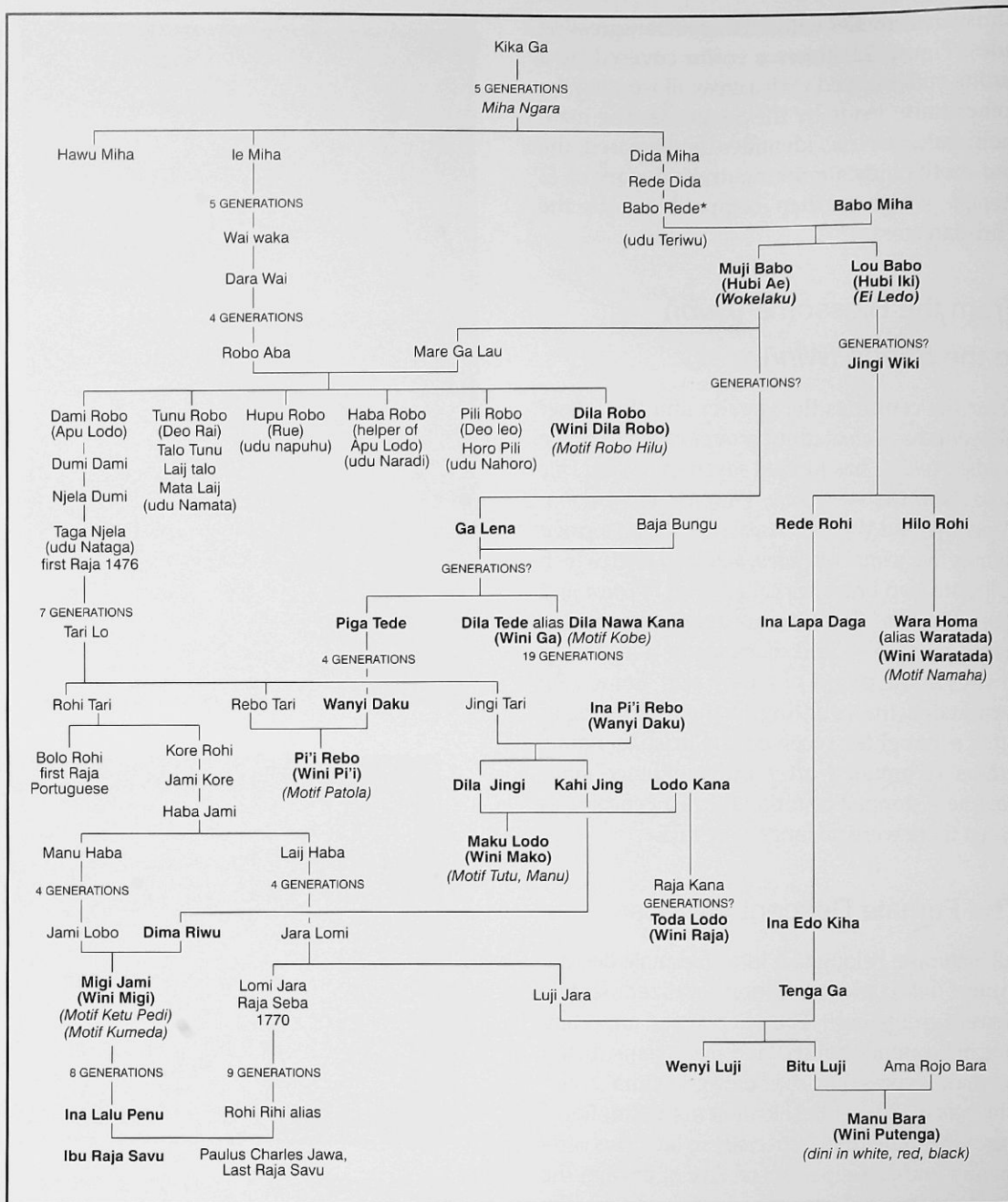
At funerals, for example, members of the *wini* of the deceased arrive from several parts of the island carrying a sarong from their heirloom basket for a woman or a hip cloth, or *selimut*, for a man. There are tens of such garments gathered for the occasion. Some are put in the coffin; others are kept in the family heirloom basket of the deceased. During the funeral ceremonies the



Figs. 4, 5, 6. Sarongs *Ei Ledo*, *Hubi Iki* (details). This type shows four large black bands (*roa*) per half piece. The middle seam is black. The bands of small motifs are often less elaborate than for *Hubi Ae*. Figure 4 shows a complete *hebe* (main motif): in the center, motif *ledo* (name of an ancestor); the zigzag lines (*terirai*) recall the fight of the two sisters; the side motifs (*na linu*) are also used as exclusive motifs for *Hubi Iki*, shown slightly modified by the weaver on figures 5 and 6. All sarongs handspun, handwoven cotton, natural dyes. Private collection, Savu.



Women from *Hubi Iki* were less open to sharing information, and it was not possible to reconstruct all the links between the *wini* of that moiety. The creation of a *wini* of *Hubi Iki* seems more related to legends than to historical facts.



Since most Savunese are now Christian, it became possible to obtain fragmented genealogies and to reconstruct the female lineage of the Greater Blossom group (*Hubi Ae*). Although the male and female genealogies exist separately, some informants could name the oldest brother or the father of an important female ancestor so

The genealogy of the wife of the last raja of Savu, given here, indicates the branching of a certain number of *wini* of *Hubi Ae* (fig. 7). Once a modern Savunese who knew only his *hubi* affiliation (*Hubi Ae*) escorted me to the house of a *Wini Ga* member famous for "crying" genealogies for hours at funerals. When he was asked about his *wini*, my friend had to admit that he never knew; but when he asked about his mother's name, he

was told immediately that they both were from the same *wini*, and without hesitation their last common female ancestor was named. This shows that some people live surrounded by the invisible web of their ancestors and that the links are still alive and meaningful. It also explains the fear that people have of disturbing the ancestors when naming them outside a ritual.

In figure 7, the names of female ancestors and their *wini* are written in bold, the specific motif in italic. The diagram helps to understand why one *wini* is entitled to certain motifs while another is not. For example, the descendants of *Dila Tede*, who started *Wini Ga*, are entitled to use the motifs *wokelaku* and *kobe*, while members of *Wini Dila Robo* do not wear the motif *kobe*. In round brackets is the specific motif of the *wini*. A woman is called after her first child's name; for example, *Ina Ga Lena* means mother of *Ga Lena*. The first ancestors do not use the name *Ina* because this happened before the coming of the Portuguese (or, more likely because they are mythological figures).

All women of *Hubi Ae* share the *wokelaku* motif. This motif, the oldest of this moiety,¹¹ is in the shape of a lozenge. It appears in four variations:

1. *Wokelaku kaji ruhelagi*, pounded tamarind leaves (fig. 8), is a popular ingredient for medicines and cosmetics on the island; a children's song refers to it:

*Ruhelagi ta kaji pe kedee hammi
Dammu due riwo tellu Ngahu buru
Ta wo marra gehu taru helagi ee.*¹²

2. *Wokelaku kewarewa* is very similar to the motif *ruhelagi* except that the loops are open.

3. *Wokelaku kaji wopudi*, white leaves (fig. 9).

4. *Wokelaku kae kuhi*, the ward of a key.

All women of *Hubi Iki* have the serpentine-like motif *Ei Ledo* in common (fig. 4). The zigzag on both sides of the main motif is said to symbolize thunder and to recall the fight between the two sisters.

Weavings in Relation to Specific *Wini*

The Special Rank of *Wini Dila Robo*

Wini Dila Robo is the oldest *wini* of *Hubi Ae*. *Dila Robo*'s five brothers were the first five priests of the traditional religion. Among them were *Dami Robo* who became *Apu Lodo*, *Pili Robo* who became *Deo Leo*, and *Tunu Robo* who became *Deo Rai*, the priest of the earth. Together the brothers form *Mone Ama*, the ancestral religion. They are also at the origin of new clans (*udu*) whose genealogies have been recorded because most of their descendants became *rajas*.¹³ Their genealogies count twenty-one generations since the first Savunese ancestor *Kika Ga*, and twenty to thirty generations from their father *Robo Aba* until the present. Members of *Wini Dila Robo* have a special place in the Savunese community. They are the keepers of the secret burial places of the traditional priests (*Mone Ama*), and

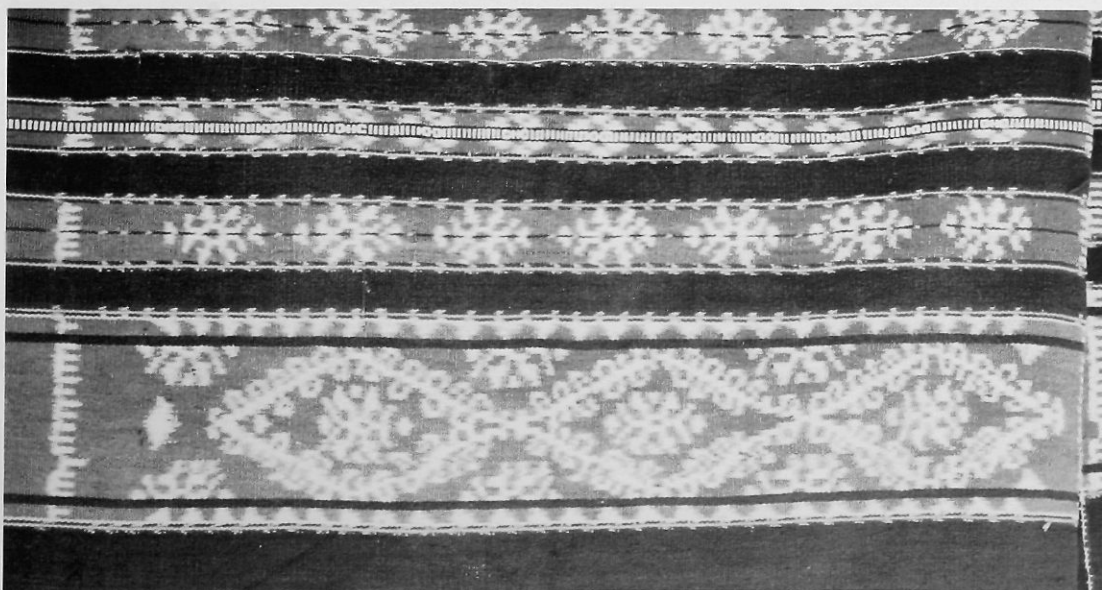


Fig. 8. *Ei Raja*, *Hubi Ae*, motif *wokelaku kaji ruhelagi* (tamarind leaves). Private collection, Savu.



Fig. 9. Sarong *Ei Raja*, *Hubi Ae*, motif *wokelaku kaji wopudi* (white leaves). Private collection, Savu.

as such they live near the sacred places of the island. *Wini Dila Robo* was created by analogy to the brothers who were at the origin of the five categories of priests.

A characteristic of *Wini Dila Robo* is that the bride wears two sarongs for her wedding, which

takes place at midnight. One sarong with the motif *robo*, which forms horizontal lines (fig. 16), is worn in the traditional way. The second sarong with the motif *hilu*¹⁴ is wrapped between her neck and waist so that her arms are not free until she arrives at the house of the bridegroom. For funerals the deceased of *Wini Dila Robo* would be wrapped in a sarong with the motif *robo* only.

Wini Dila Robo also has a special sarong called *dula* (fig. 24), which is used to carry away excess soil after the burial of traditional priests. Savunese believe that this soil contains some of the priestly power and that anyone taking such soil would derive power from it. Thus, the burial places of the priests must be kept secret.

Dula probably refers to the function of the sarong and not to the specific representation of the motif, although *dula* means "container" and, as such, is extremely important in Savunese life. The container, or *dula*, is made of the base of a branch of the areca palm tree whose fruit is the betel nut. The branch is soaked in water for a few days until it becomes soft and flexible. Then it is formed into a basin, a tray, or a container that has a ship-like shape. In the past a newborn baby made its first contact with the world in a *dula* in which it took its first bath. The *dula* is also used for the ceremony of *Daba*, the traditional baptism. It is used every day to obtain sea salt by evaporation, and it is also the ceremonial boat put to sea during purification ceremonies of the island.

Fig. 10. Detail of motif *kobe morena*, *Wini Ga*, *Hubi Ae*. Handspun, handwoven cotton, natural dyes. 1.73 x 1.61 m. Author's collection.



The motif *dula* is also found on *selimut*, in which the shape of a container can be recognized.

Wini Ga

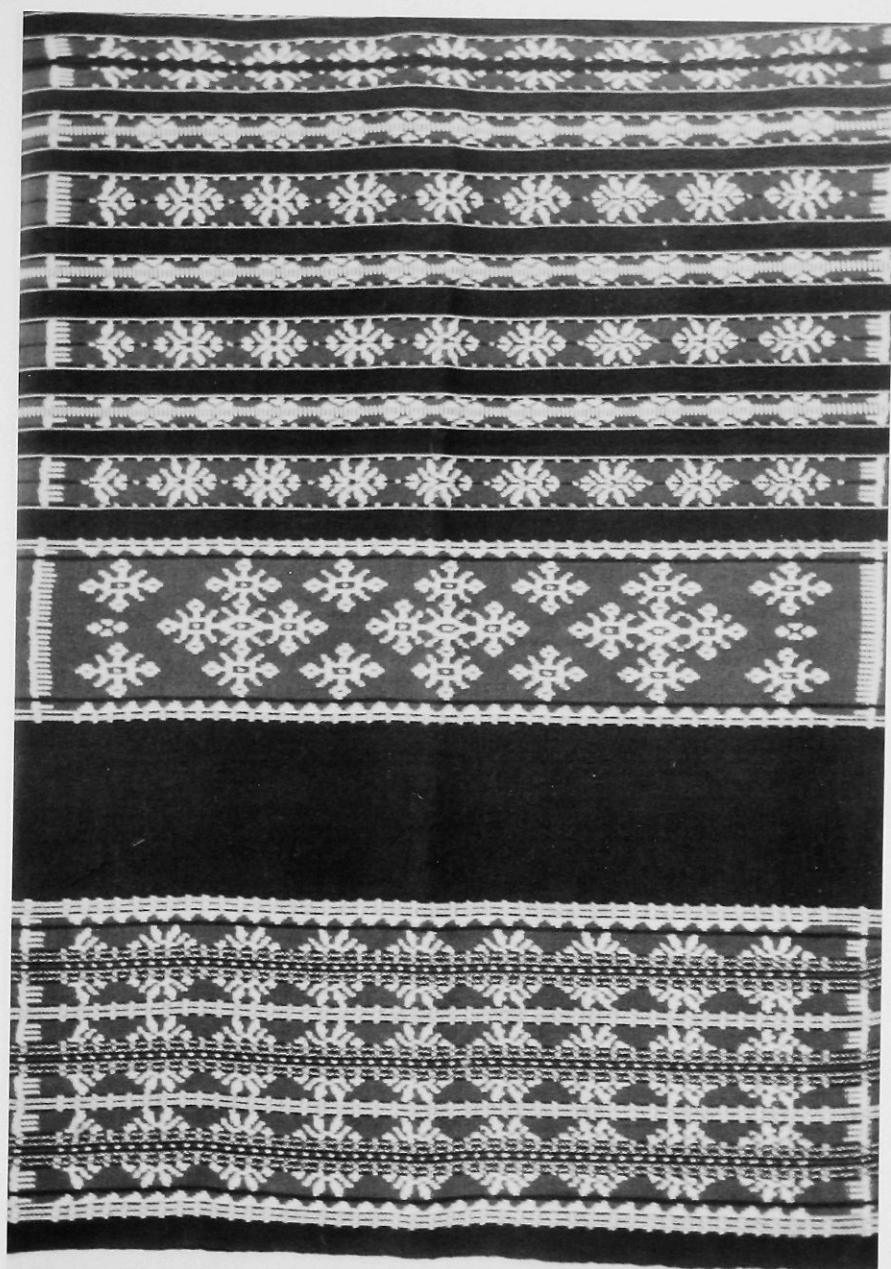
The story of Dila Tede, alias Dila Nawa Kana, takes place at a time of war involving the Portuguese, the Dutch, and several islands of the Lesser Sundas. Dila Tede left Savu to meet with the raja of Solor at Kota Ga (island of Adonara). When she arrived she was told that the raja would not receive her. Using the name of a common ancestor of a rival group, she said that she had come as *Ga Lena Uli Wo Helagi, horo mada de waru*¹⁵ and that she had brought the bones of the victims of the war. In fact she was carrying horse bones, which are as white as human bones. After being welcomed by the raja, she was offered his heirloom box. She returned to Savu with the box, a fleet of seven ships, the Dutch flag, and guns. This event must have taken place after the building of the first Dutch fortress in Solor (1648) and before the first trade contract signed between the Savunese and the Dutch (1756). For more than a century the Portuguese and the Dutch fought for supremacy over the island of Solor.¹⁶

Dila Tede created a new *wini* using the name of her ancestor Ga Lena, which helped her to supplant a rival clan, and chose as an emblem the motif represented on the heirloom box, motif *kobe morena* (fig. 10). The box was kept at the *tegida*, or meeting house, of Wini Ga in Namata. Since there is no longer a *tegida* in Namata, the heavy bronze box was carried to Deppe, eight kilometers from Namata, where it is still kept in Deppe's *tegida*. In Kota Ga a tamarind tree apparently marks the place of the historical meeting.¹⁷

Hubi Iki has a similar motif called *kobe molai* (male *kobe*). The horizontal branches are closed. It has been created perhaps by analogy to the motif of Wini Ga; no reason is known, however, for the choice of the motif *kobe molai* for *Hubi Iki* (fig. 11).

Wini Pi'i and Wini Mako

Pi'i Rebo is the daughter of Wanyi Daku (Ina Pi'i Rebo) and Rebo Tari. After the death of her husband, Ina Pi'i Rebo married his younger brother Jingi Tari.¹⁸ The daughter of the first marriage started a new *wini*, *Wini Pi'i*; while the daughter of the second marriage, Dila Jingi, became Ina Mako Lodo after marriage and also started a new *wini*, *Wini Mako*. These two *wini* were linked to ruling classes and have a large number of motifs restricted to the rajas,



especially *patola* motifs.¹⁹

Since chickens are present in all rituals involving weaving, the women of Wini Mako have chosen the chicken as an emblem of their *wini* to honor their ancestors. The motif is called *manu* if the chicken is the most important part of the motif or *tutu* if the chicken is pecking something (figs. 12, 13, and 14). On some sarongs, chicken motifs are on both sides, while a branching motif, *pe akki*, which means "to connect," occupies the center (fig. 15). Essential for the identification of the motif in relation to Wini Mako is the placement of the chicken on both ends of the panel and not as a central motif.

Fig. 11. Detail of motif *kobe molai*, *Hubi Iki*. Made as *Ei Raja* for commercial purposes. Industrial cotton, chemical dyes. 1.61 x 1.62 m. Author's collection.



Fig. 12. Detail of motif *manu*, *Hubi Ae*. Collection of Dr. Wijitra.

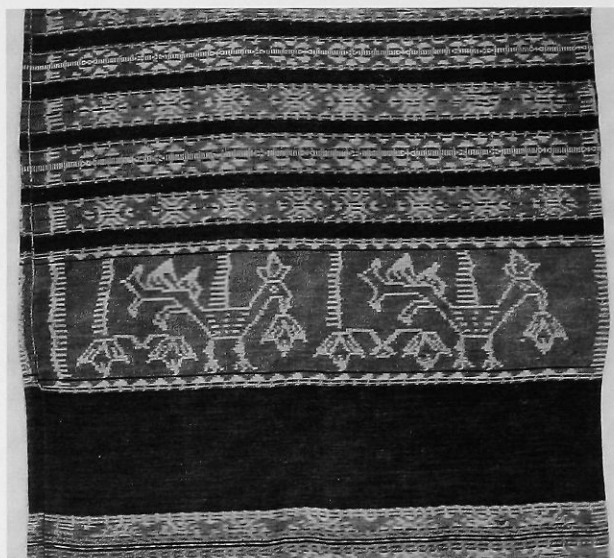


Fig. 14. Sarong *Ei Raja*, motif *tutu*.



Fig. 13. Two women of Mesara (West Savu). On the left, traditional sarong from *Wini Ga* (motif *kobe*); on the right, *Worapi* sarong with the traditional motif *tutu* of *Wini Mako*.

The Lesser Blossoms also have a bird motif; it is called *kae hoge*. The motif shows three groups of two birds facing each other; their elongated legs and crest are reminiscent of sea birds; their heads are said to be seen from the front, not in profile — a difficult view point to represent and one almost impossible to recognize.

Wini Raja

Raja in this context does not refer to the ruling classes; rather it means “to nail” or “to hammer.” It recalls the story of *Toda Lodo*, a Savunese girl who, as the first female descendant of *Lodo Kana*, a rich goldsmith on the island of *Ndao* (east of Savu), possessed much gold. When *Toda Lodo* married on the island of *Raijua*, she did not ask for gold as a bride price but only for horses and buffaloes. Her gold was hammered onto the top of a sterile *lontar* palm tree to remind the next generation of her story. Starting a new *wini*, *Toda Lodo* set a rule that the bride price of *Wini Raja* not be comprised of gold. A specific motif of *Wini Raja* is called *bunga baraka*, or mirror flower.

Fig. 15. Sarong *Ei Raja*, motif *pe akki*. Private collection, Seba.

Wini Migi

The start of *Wini Migi*, the youngest *wini* of *Hubi Ae*, is linked to a war between the small state of Menia and the state of Seba. A young girl named Dima Riwu was promised in marriage to Raja Jami Lobo of Seba. Although she was still a child, she was living at the raja's palace in Seba; when she became seriously ill, she was sent back to her family in Mesara. Later she married the feto²⁰ of Menia, Tero Weo, and they had a daughter, Mamo Tero. But the raja of Seba kidnapped Dima Riwu, who had once been promised to him, and thereby caused a war between Menia and Seba. This conflict, which is still known as the Tero Weo War, ended with the disappearance of the state of Menia. Dima Riwu and Migi Jami, Jami Lobo's daughter, started a new *wini*, *Wini Migi*. It seems that the specific motifs of *Wini Migi* are motifs entirely restricted to rajas.

Wini Jawu

The story of Jawu Liru, or Jawu from the sky, combines elements from reality and myth. When Jawu Liru, known on earth as Lilo Rohi, was still a child, her father rejected her and her mother, arguing that the mother dedicated all her time to the child and refused to work in the fields. He took the daughter out to the fields, where she was taken to the sky by Apu Lodo Liru (priest of the sky), who took care of her. When she grew up, she came back to earth and landed first on the top of a tree (*pohon heliru*), then came down on the back of a white cow, and used the stems of the black sugar cane to reach the ground. She changed her name to Jawu Liru. Since that time her descendants do not use the *pohon heliru* as firewood, nor do they eat beef or sugar derived from cane. Women of *Wini Jawu Liru* do not distinguish themselves from other *wini* through a special motif on their sarong but rather through a special diet. Since Savunese claim that their ancestors came from India, the diet of *Wini Jawu Liru* might be linked to traditions brought to the island by the first settlers.

Jingi Wiki

Although the descendants of *Jingi Wiki* have a *tegida* where they keep their weavings, the name *wini* is denied to this group, which has been replaced by two subgroups, *Waratada* and *Putenga*, whose sarongs are distinguished by twisted threads called *hika* or *dini*.

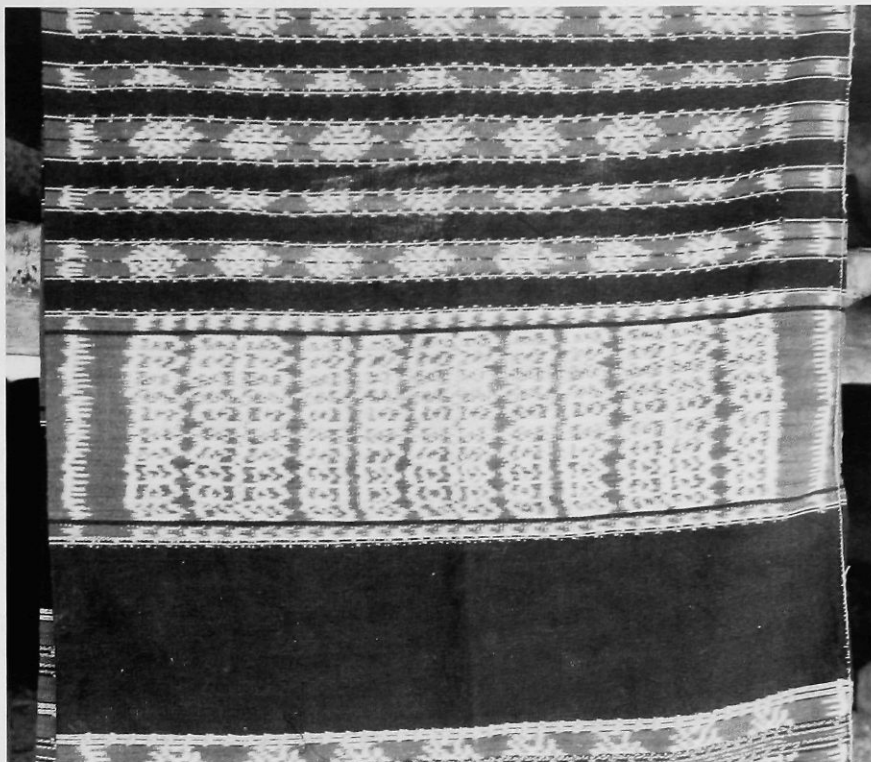


Fig. 16. Sarong *Ei Robo*, *Wini Dila Robo*, *Hubi Ae*. This type of sarong is used for weddings and funerals of this *wini*. *Pusaka* of Mado Ke in *Namata*. Handspun, handwoven cotton, natural dyes.

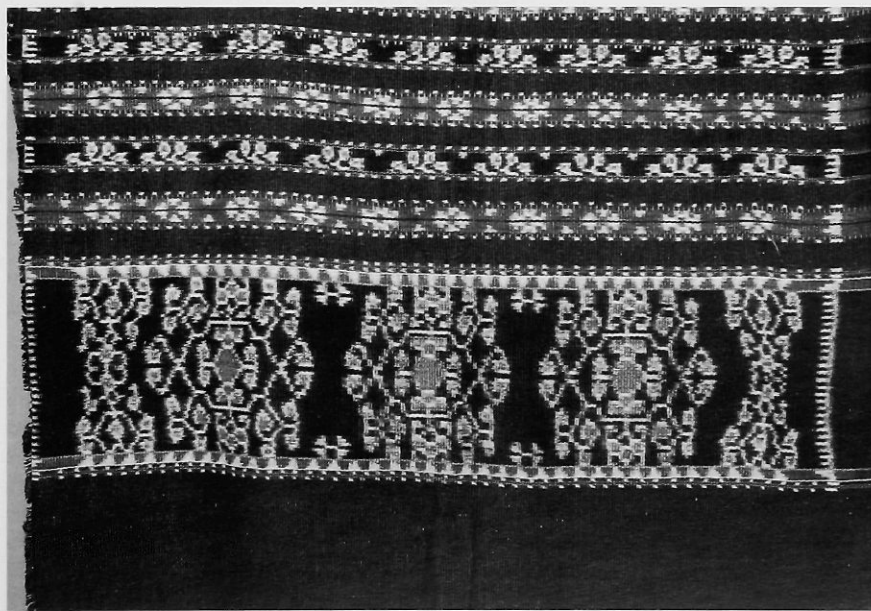


Fig. 17. Traditional motif for *Wini Jingi Wiki*, *Hubi Iki*, taken from a plate kept in the heirloom basket of the *wini*. Collection of Dr. Wijitra.

Savunese are reluctant to talk about *Jingi Wiki*. The story might be as follows: Some ancestors were invited to a wedding in Liae, but no food was left when they arrived, and they were told to return home and take whatever they needed to eat on their way back. Since that time *Jingi Wiki* people kept the habit of stealing food for rituals. Women of *Jingi Wiki* are said to use witchcraft and to "bewitch and steal" husbands. *Jingi Wiki* has a very fine motif that is said to be represented on an old plate kept in the *tegida* in Deppe (fig. 17), a *tegida* now shared by the descendants of *Jingi Wiki* and *Wini Putenga*.

Wini Waratada: Hubi Ae or Hubi Iki?

The appearance of *Wini Waratada* in both clans is explained through a legend that exists in many variations and is recalled in a Savunese song. A young woman of *Hubi Iki* named Hilo Rohi lived in the village of Bolou in East Savu. Her husband, Homa Lou, wanted a son. While his wife was pregnant, he had to go away for a long time. She had to promise him to keep the child only if it was a son. Alas, the woman gave birth to Wara Homa, such a beautiful girl that she did not have the heart to kill her but instead hid her in the attic. When the husband returned, she told him that they had had a daughter who no longer lived. One day, however, the father found out about his daughter. Enraged, he decided to kill her with his dagger, but she jumped into the

sea from the cliffs at Liegeta and was saved by a whale. There are two versions for the end of the story. East Savunese say that Wara Homa lived in a cave near Liegeta, where she performed a specific weaving with the motif *namaha*, representing the whale which saved her life. *Namaha* means "manatee" in Savunese. She still belonged to her mother's *hubi* but took the name of her father's sister, Tada Lou, and became known as *Waratada*. In another version of the legend, the young girl was carried by the whale to the other end of the island. When she appeared in the village of Lohohede on West Savu, she was wearing a sarong with the seven distinctive black stripes of *Hubi Ae*. This is how she explained her *hubi* connection.

To avoid any controversy, pragmatic Savunese explain that when a non-Savunese marries a Savunese, after a certain number of years and a successful marriage, he or she may enter the *udu* and the *hubi* of his or her Savunese spouse.

The stories of *Waratada* and *Jawu Liru* show certain similarities. Both girls were rejected by their father; both left the earth, one taking to the sky, the other to the sea. Both created a new lineage after coming back. Their stories seem to have taken place between thirty and forty generations ago. The twisted threads on a *Waratada* sarong placed on the bottom and upper parts of the end motifs (*yuli wurumada*) are yellow and red. This earmark helps to identify a sarong from *Wini Waratada*. Sometimes the side motifs on the sarong of *Hubi Ae Waratada* show a fish, which is said to represent the whale that saved Wara Homa's life. The sarong of *Hubi Iki Waratada* shows two bands of the same motif, as mentioned above an exception among Savunese weavings (fig. 18). The sarongs of *Wini Waratada* are distinguished by twisted thread that are yellow and red.

Wini Putenga

Wini Putenga tells the tragic story of Tenga Ga, a descendant of *Jingi Wiki*, and her daughter, Bitu Luji. Tenga Ga, sister of Lodo Ga from Mesara, married Luji Jara, who was already married.²¹ Tenga Ga and Luji Jara had two daughters, Wenyi Luji and Bitu Luji. Tenga Ga became Ina Wenyi Luji and Luji Jara became Ama Wenyi Luji, since parents carry the name of their first-born child. One day at a meeting between Lodo Ga and Ama Wenyi Luji, the latter started eating before Lodo Ga and thus committed a serious

Fig. 18. Sarong of *Wini Waratada, Hubi Iki*. Remarkable are the two bands of main motifs on the sarong, an exception among Savunese weavings and characteristic of *Wini Waratada* of the Lesser Blossom. Private collection, Savu.



offense. This caused a war in Liti, known among the Savunese as the Ama Wenyi Luji War. When the relatives of Tenga Ga in Liae heard about the war but had no news from their relatives at Liti, they sent two dogs with betel nut attached to their necks. The dogs returned still carrying the nuts, an indication that something had happened. Two sisters, Kalidari and Nida, traveled to Liti and found everybody dead except the young Bitu Luji, who was trying to suck milk from her dead mother Tenga Ga. They took Bitu Luji back to Liae, where she grew up at the house of Kalidari and became a goatherd. Many years later while Bitu Luji was watching her goats she met a man named Ama Rojo Bara, who offered her betel nuts. She accepted the nuts, but instead of eating them, she brought them home. When Ama Rojo Bara asked for Bitu Luji's hand in marriage, his own son was already in love with her. A fight between father and son led to the father's victory, and eventually Bitu Luji married Ama Rojo Bara. Their daughter Manu Bara fetched the heirloom basket of her grandmother Tenga Ga and started a new *wini*, *Putenga*, meaning granddaughter of Tenga (Apu Tenga).

A *Putenga* sarong can be identified by a careful look at the small rows of twisted threads on the bottom and upper parts of the end motifs (*yuli wurumada*). The twisted threads, called *hika* or *dini* are white, red, and black for *Wini Putenga*.

The Bride Price

When a woman creates a *wini*, she often chooses a distinctive pattern as an emblem for her lineage, and she might even set new rules for the bride price.

The essential part of the bride price shared by all *wini* is betel nut (*pinang*), so that when Savunese want to express that a girl has been asked for in marriage they say she has been offered betel nut.

Women of *Hubi Ae* generally have betel nut, gold, and/or cattle for their bride price. There is no gold in the bride price of *Hubi Iki*, only betel nut and cattle. *Wini Dila Robo* has the most modest bride price (no gold), but it retains its high status in the community because it is the oldest *wini* of *Hubi Ae*. Members of *Dila Robo* explain that humans cannot be evaluated in terms of material goods. *Wini Mako* is said to have the highest bride price. A woman can not ask for a bride price higher than that of the first ancestor of the *wini*. If a marriage breaks up, the bride price is not paid back. If a woman marries a second time,

a bride price in the same amount is paid again. For example, Wanyi Daku, alias Ina Pi'i Rebo, received a bride price twice.

As long as the bride price has not been paid, a child receives its name from its mother and belongs to its mother's clan. The female genealogies are much more difficult to remember than male genealogies in which the name of the child always contains half of the name of the father. In female genealogies the name of the child may or may not contain part of the name of the mother, depending on the payment of the bride price or whether a child was born before or without marriage. Not all Savunese manage to marry according to the traditional rules. The fact that a child carries its mother name discredits neither the mother nor the child in the community.

The specific motif of a *wini* serves a very practical purpose. Since marriage is encouraged within the same *wini*, or at least within the same *hubi*, a young man looking at a girl's sarong would know immediately if she could be a possible match for him and if his family could afford the bride price.

Ceremonies Related to *Wini* and Weavings

The *Tegida*

Every *wini* in the past had a *tegida*, or meeting house, where weavings and tools for rituals were kept.²² The *kepepe*, or heirloom basket, contains the weavings. Only a few such buildings remain today. The sacred places of Namata near Seba no longer have any *tegida*. A *dadap* tree (*Erythrina*) symbolizes the meeting place, and dyed threads are hung on its branches.²³ The village of Pedaro near Mesara in West Savu still has three *tegida* (figs. 19, 20). Once a year at Bui'hi in April the women of the same *wini* meet at their *tegida* after dark. There they have a ceremonial meal and open the heirloom baskets. These baskets contain only weavings the *wini* is allowed to wear. The traditional patterns serve as models for new weavings, and women exchange their knowledge. Old or damaged weavings are replaced (and sold to tourists and collectors). The weaving tools are blessed with lontar palm juice.

Certain motifs were used to distinguish a group of women who belonged to the same *wini* or who performed rituals specific to that *wini*. The general term is *hebe pusaka*, or motifs-of-the-heirloom-basket-where-the-specific-weavings-are-kept.

Fig. 19. An old woman of *Wini Ga* sitting in front of the *tegida* of her *wini* in Pedaro, Mesara, West Savu.



Fig. 20. Inside the *tegida* are baskets made of lontar palm leaves, the *kepepe* containing the weavings, and the *pusaka* with heirlooms of the *wini*.



Three ceremonies take place at the *tegida* for the making of a single sarong: for the harvest of the indigo leaves, for the making of the dye, and for the preparation of the loom. Since there are only two ceremonies at the *tegida* during one year, the third ceremony coincides with a previous one, and the time required for making a traditional sarong is at least one and a half years.

The Forbidden Months

During certain months of the Savunese lunar calendar,²⁴ from *Daba Iki* (February) until *Banga Liwu* (May), women are not allowed to weave; those months are devoted to work in the fields and to the harvest. With the start of the dry season and the tapping of the lontar juice, there are almost no agricultural activities and weaving begins. A woman must weave the particular sarong of her *wini* or the identifying sarong of her *hubi* to start and finish the weaving season.

Making the Dye

In February, two days before harvesting the indigo leaves, offerings of chicken liver and dried pork fat are thought to ensure a successful harvest. Lime, an important ingredient of indigo dye, is taken from the sea in the calendar month of *Wadu Ae* (August). At Tunu Manu, after the priest of the earth (Deo Rai) has taken coral from the sea, people are allowed to fetch corals and burn them with dried excrement of buffalo. After sieving, the pure lime is kept in clay pots covered with leaves.

Red dye is obtained from the roots of the *mengkudu* tree (*Morinda citrifolia*). Before cutting the roots, the tree is wrapped in a red *selimut* (man's hip cloth) whose numerous fringes represent the roots of the tree.

The First and the Last Sarong

Between the ages of three and five a boy is introduced to his first *selimut* (*Higi Lekko Ue*) and a girl to her first sarong (*Ei Lekko Ue*) during a "traditional baptism ceremony" called *Daba*, which takes place once a year in March for all newborn children.²⁵ The first sarong or *selimut* has stripes but no motifs (fig. 21). Afterward, a girl can wear a sarong with the motifs of the mother's moiety, or nowadays a *Worapi* sarong, and a boy can wear one of two kinds of man's *selimut*, according to the *hubi* of his mother.

Funerals must be prepared and performed

by members of the same *wini*: for a man, by his brother or a male member of his *wini*; for a woman, by a sister or a female member of the same *wini*. Sitting in a fetal position with arms embracing the knees, a man is wrapped in one or more *wohapi selimut*, since no further distinction is made for men. The *wohapi* motif in the shape of a rhombus symbolizing a fish is the oldest motif for *selimut* and is reminiscent of a time when the first ancestors had no cattle and derived their living from the sea. A woman is wrapped first in the distinctive sarong of her *wini*. Then she is wrapped in more sarongs that she has kept in her heirloom basket for the occasion and in sarongs brought by the members of her *wini*. For Savunese Christians today, the coffin is covered with the distinctive sarong of the *hubi* (figs. 22, 23). During the second evening of the funeral, the matrilineal and patrilineal genealogies are recited in complete silence. Nowadays parents tend to exclude children from this ceremony, fearing that the youngsters will not stay quiet and will disturb the ancestors.

Knowledge transmitted solely by oral tradition is getting lost; many young people no longer know their complete genealogies. The female genealogy is not mentioned outside the funerals. It has to be recited without hesitation, interruption, or error, and always starting with the first ancestor, never with the last.

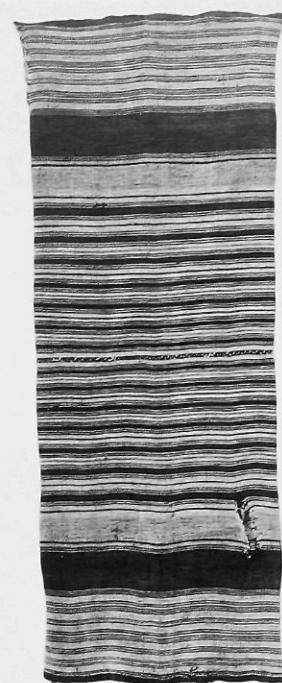


Fig. 21. A child's first sarong worn during the *Daba* ceremony. Handspun, hand-woven, natural indigo dyes. 0.87 x 1.62 m.



Fig. 22. A *Worapi* sarong with motif *patola morena* covering a coffin.



Fig. 23. A woman from Jingi Wiki shows the predetermined Ei Ledo sarong for her funeral.

Some *wini* have sarongs for specific stages of the ceremony. As already noted, *Wini Dila Robo* has a special sarong, *dula*, which is used to carry excess soil after burial (fig. 24). *Dula* means "basin" or "container" and probably refers to the function of the sarong and not to the specific representation of the motif. The word *dula* appears in a certain number of ceremonies with the meaning of container; it is the basin used at *Daba*, the traditional baptism. *Dula* is also the ceremonial boat put to sea to purify the island.

Women from the nearby island of Raijua (considered the mother island of all Savunese) have as a shroud a sarong called *Ei Pudi Tie* (figs. 25, 26). It is remarkable for its lack of motif, in this

way similar to the child's first sarong; it shows the four large stripes characteristic of the *Ei Ledo*. A similar *selimut* called *Higi Pudi Tie* is compulsory for men of Raijua.

Motifs Restricted to the Ruling Classes

In the 18th century the Dutch granted the titles of raja and feto to two prominent leaders of each of the states of Savu. In 1907 the raja of Seba became the ruler of Savu. The status of the ruling class was reflected in a certain number of weaving motifs that were restricted to the raja. Skillful women were chosen by the raja family to weave the elaborate motif whose aim was to show prestige and status. The motifs were often taken from the raja's regalia, crown, and belt, or from carvings of imported Dutch colonial furniture (fig. 30).

The motif *kettu koi* (fig. 31) was the prerogative of the first raja of East Savu. The motif *ketu pedi* (figs. 27, 28), inspired by a silver buckle, was the prerogative of the raja of Savu. Men's *selimut* also have a motif called *ketu pedi* for which there is no restriction (fig. 29). The motif *kumeda* (commander) was inspired by a foreign military official (fig. 32).²⁶

Any transgression of these rules was severely punished and the weaving destroyed. These rules no longer exist. Many of these motifs appear now on *Worapi* sarongs.

How to Fold a Savunese Sarong

The only correct way to fold a Savunese sarong emphasizes the distinction and significance of the red or black seam. Each sarong is first folded lengthwise; then, starting from the ends, it is folded three times toward the seam. Finally, both halves are brought together one above the other as if closing a book. Folded this way, what first attracts attention when a woman takes a pile of sarongs out of her heirloom basket is the seam. The main motif is not visible; it is the red or black seam that distinguishes the female moiety.

Whenever I returned from an interview, women of the neighborhood wanted to examine the pieces I brought home, and suddenly I was surrounded. I was asked the name of the weaver, who may have passed away long ago. Looking at the seam, the women responded to my answer with the word *betul* (true). And then, after looking at the main motif, a short discussion often



Fig. 24. *Ei Raja*, *Wini Dila Robo*, motif *dula*, used only during burial for *Wini Dila Robo*. Private collection, Savu.

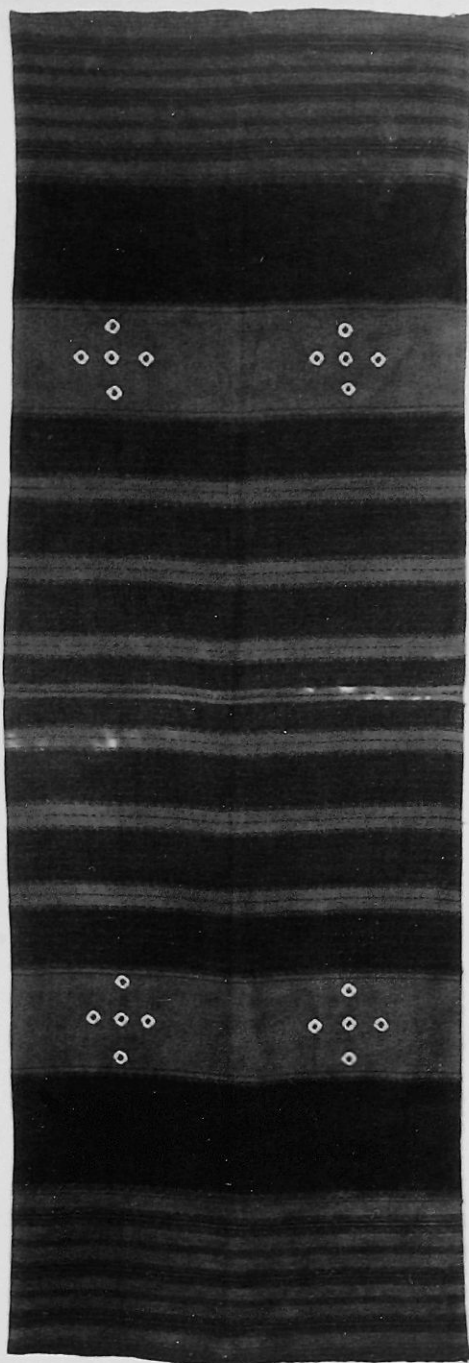


Fig. 26. *Ei Pudi Mau*, also a shroud for women of Raijua. The motifs are obtained through *plangi*, a resist technique in which the cloth is tied with a thread before dyeing. 1.58 x 1.54 m. Author's collection.

Fig. 25. *Ei Pudi Tie*, shroud, for all women of Raijua. Handspun, handwoven cotton. Private collection, Raijua.

Fig. 27. The wife of the last raja of Savu (right) is wearing the silver belt that gave the motif *ketu pedi* to the sarong she is wearing (1947). Note that she is wearing a modern neutral sarong decorated with beads.



Fig. 28. Detail of the motif *ketu pedi* worn on figure 27. Collection of Ibu Raja Savu.

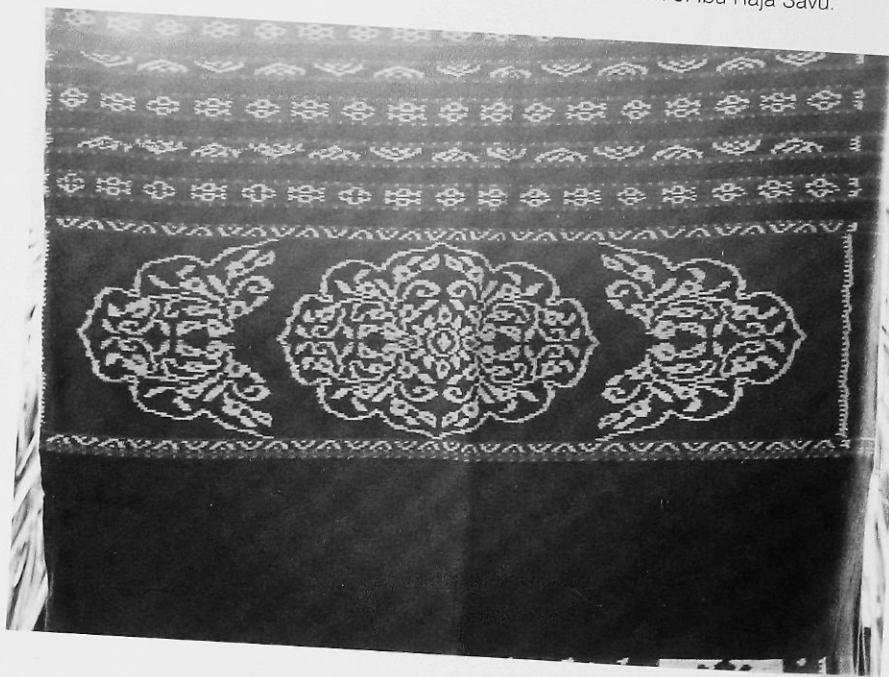
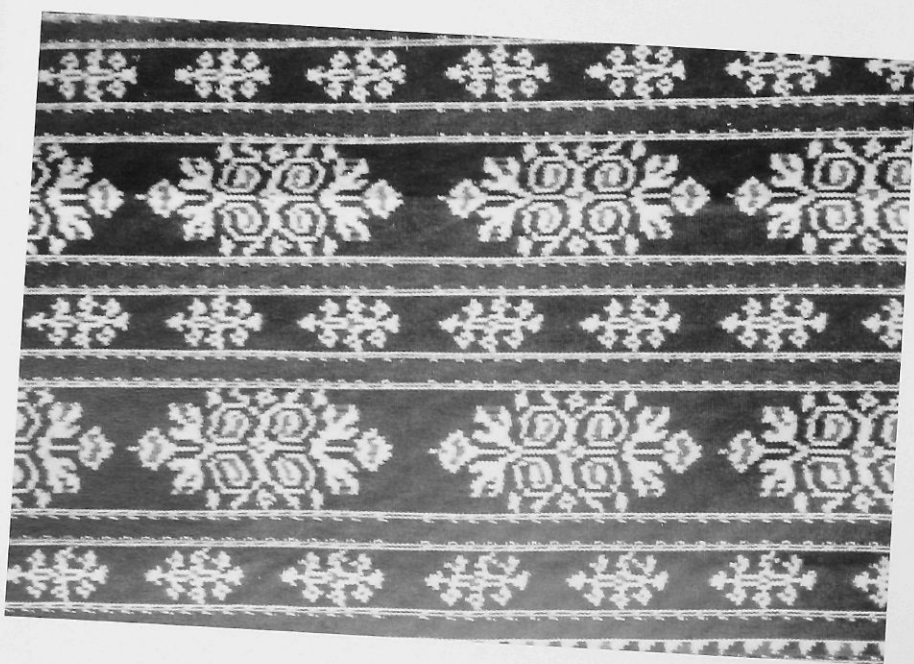


Fig. 29. The motif *ketu pedi* for men's *selimut*, not restricted to any group. Collection of Dr. Wijitra.



ensued, followed by the word *boleh* (she may), meaning that the weaver was entitled to use the motif for a textile made according to the most conservative rules.

Conclusion

The matrilineal lineage of the Savunese, as expressed through weaving, forms a significant part of a complex genealogical system. Each *wini*, consisting of a female line of descent, plays an important role in the social life of the Savunese. The motifs of each *wini* enable identification of a woman from a distance. In life-crisis ceremonies these motifs reactivate the links among the members of a lineage. In daily life men have no comparable system of identification, other than the distinction between the two moieties, *Hubi Ae* and *Hubi Iki*.

Savunese ikats in museums around the world often exhibit motifs restricted to specific *wini*. Although they may be admired for aesthetic reasons, their primary purpose was not decorative. There is the potential to glean significantly more information than has been presented here. For example, attendance at the annual ceremony of *Bui'hi*, which traditionally takes place in April, is restricted to females. This might provide an opportunity for further study. In

addition, garments may still be kept in heirloom baskets of various *tegida* on the island of Savu.

One difficulty in obtaining information is that the knowledge of genealogies is not shared among the *wini*. In general, the women of *Hubi Ae* were more open to providing information than those of *Hubi Iki*. Most of my informants were from ruling classes of the past, and in some cases, it was not possible to determine if a motif was the prerogative of a *wini* or of a raja, especially in the case of *patola* motifs.

Acknowledgments

My thanks go to the Savunese women who opened their heirloom baskets for me, sometimes after the sacrifice of a chicken. Through their generosity, I was able to examine traditional weavings of their moiety.

Since my first stay in Savu in 1994, Pak Elo Huma Lado, the handsome *sasando*²⁷ player associated with the cultural organization *Sanggar* and teacher in Seba, decided to record the legends linked to female descent groups. He was particularly interested in those dealing with historical events of the island and wanted to include these texts in school programs. Without his help I would not have been able to receive such detailed information about the male and female descent groups since Savunese are reluctant to talk about their genealogies with non-Savunese.

After my stay on the island, I met Dr. Wijitra, who spent three years (1985–88) as a doctor on Savu, during which time he became very interested in traditional Savunese ikat weavings. Numerous textiles were given to him by patients. I was able to compare my samples with those in his collection. He generously shared his knowledge.



Fig. 31. Sarong with motif *kettu koi*, created at the time of the first raja of East Savu. Private collection, Savu.

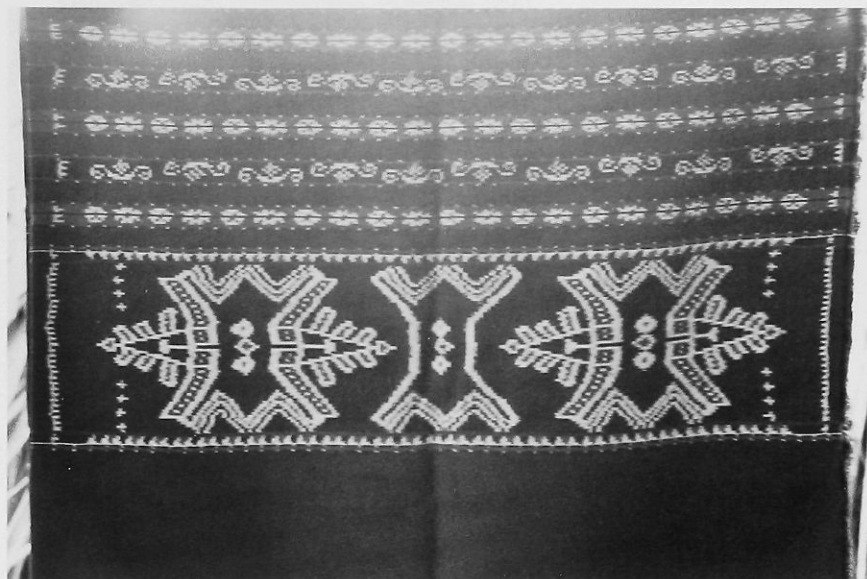


Fig. 30. Sarong with motif *pudila*, earlier restricted to the raja of Seba. Figure 3 shows a variation of the motif on a *Worapi* sarong. Private collection, Savu.



Fig. 32. Sarong with motif *kumeda*, restricted to the raja of Savu. Private collection, Savu.

About the author

During the last six years Geneviève Duggan visited the island of Savu on several occasions while lecturing for Spice Island Cruises. She fell in love with the island, its people, their rich culture, and their weavings, and began to collect Savunese ikats. Having learned that some motifs serve to identify a female lineage, she proceeded to conduct research on Savu and was fortunate in obtaining the help of the cultural association. Her guides were also interested in recording knowledge about matrilineal descent groups and traditional weavings; and they were able to persuade the Savunese of the correctness of the enterprise.

A graduate student at the University of Heidelberg, Ms. Duggan is engaged in further research on the island of Savu.

Notes

1. Fox 1979.
2. Fox 1972, p. 78; Fox 1977, p. 98.
3. Compare with the male genealogies recorded by Detaq 1973. The descendants of Babo Rede count 30 generations, in some cases up to 50 generations.
4. *Hubi* is the general term for the blossom of the palm tree. On the island of Savu there are two essential palm trees, the lontar palm (*Borassus sundaicus*) the juice of which nourishes the inhabitants during the dry season and the areca palm whose nut is essential for betel chewing. Both plants are present in a number of rituals.
5. See Maxwell 1985. People of *Hubi Iki* are also called *Do Ai Rede*, or "people of the water below," a reference to the indigo sediment that the younger sister was left with when her older sister drained the water out of the indigo pot. Sarongs of *Hubi Iki* are actually of a rich dark blue, almost black, in accordance with the legend. *Rede* is also part of the name of the father of Muji Babo and Lou Babo, Babo Rede.
6. Maxwell 1990, p. 359.
7. *Wini* is a general term for seed and does not refer to a specific plant on the island. See note 4 above.
8. The name *wini* is now denied to *Jingi Wiki*. *Wini Piga Goe* was also mentioned, as is *Wini Hulutede*, but I have had neither confirmation nor any further information about these *wini*.
9. See Fox 1973, p. 156; Kana 1983, pp. 125–27.
10. The genealogies of the patrilineal descent groups have been published by Detaq 1973.
11. When women want to underscore that the elder sister was not skillful in weaving, they explain that at the beginning the *Hubi Ae* sarong had simply a large red band and no motif, while the *Hubi Iki* sarong showed an elaborate motif.
12. The meaning is approximately that the finely pounded leaves give the girls a beautiful scent.
13. Dami Robo, eldest brother of Dila Robo, is the great-grandfather of Taga Njela (*udu* Nataga), the first raja of Savu in 1476, before the arrival of the Portuguese, according to the records of the raja house of Seba.
14. I saw a drawing of the *hilu* motif; it is comprised of three elements that repeat three times.
15. Ga Lena of the moon that has a halo. In Savu this means death and grieving. Even today there is a saying in Savu that when the moon has a halo, someone of *Wini Ga* has passed away.
16. Fox 1973, pp. 147–51. Compare also with figure 7. There are six generations between Tila Tede's older sister and Dima Riwu, who married Tero Weo, the feto of Menia. By 1771 the state of Menia had disappeared. The *Corpus Diplomaticum Neerlandico-Indicum* does not mention Dila Tede, nor the Dutch flag nor the delivery of guns to some Savunese between 1650 and 1750.
17. There are approximately nineteen generations between Dila Tede and my informants from Wini Ga.
18. Rohi Tari, the first raja under the Portuguese, is the oldest brother of Rebo Tari and Jingi Tari.
19. Motifs derived from patola cloths imported from India and restricted to ruling classes are called motif *patola* by Savunese.

20. The title of fetor was given by the Dutch to a local ruler.

21. Luji Jara is a younger brother of Lomi Jara, who was the raja of Seba in 1770 when Captain James Cook visited the island.

22. Kana (1983, p. 123) gives various meanings for *tegida*: a wooden piece used for weaving; a wooden tool used to stretch a sarong and keep its shape while drying.

23. The *dadap* tree is a female symbol in rituals; its wood is used to make the weaving tools.

24. Different ceremonial territories have specific names for their calendar months. See Fox 1973, pp. 157, 159. The ceremonies mentioned here refer to the district of Seba.

25. Detaq 1973, p. 34.

26. The museum in Kupang has an excellent example of *Ei Raja hebe kumeda* given by Ibu Raja Savu.

27. *Sasando* is a musical instrument made from one lontar palm leaf.

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